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## Internalization Model of Santri Tolerance Values in a Multicultural Islamic Boarding School: A Phenomenological Study at Pondok Pesantren Ngalah, Pasuruan

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE INFO
<p>The increasing phenomenon of intolerance among students as reported by Setara Institute (2023), which found that 14% of students show intolerant attitudes, and PPIM UIN Jakarta (2022), which revealed that 32% of students still hold exclusive views reflects a gap between the ideals of Islamic education as rahmatan lil ‘alamin and current social realities. This study aims to examine the model and process of internalizing tolerance values among students at Pondok Pesantren Ngalah, a multicultural pesantren with students from diverse regional, cultural, and organizational backgrounds. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach with Colaizzi’s analysis model (1978), data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation, with validity ensured through triangulation and member checking. The findings reveal that the internalization of tolerance values occurs through four interconnected stages: value understanding, value instillation, habituation, and direct experience, involving cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions simultaneously. The success of this process is influenced by the diversity of students’ backgrounds, intensive daily social interactions, and the role modeling of pesantren leaders. The study concludes that educational approaches based on social experience and collective living are more effective in fostering tolerant character than purely theoretical approaches, reinforcing the role of pesantren as strategic</p>	<p><b>Article History:</b> <i>Submitted/Received 22 April 2025</i> <i>First Revised 26 Mei 2026</i> <i>Accepted 15 June 2026</i> <i>First Available online 22 June 2026</i> <i>Publication Date 22 June 2026</i></p> <p><b>Keyword:</b> <i>Multicultural Islamic Boarding Schools; Internalization of Tolerance Values; Phenomenology</i></p>

agents for promoting Islamic moderation and social harmony.

#### A B S T R A K

Fenomena meningkatnya intoleransi di kalangan pelajar sebagaimana dilaporkan oleh Setara Institute (2023) yang menemukan bahwa 14% pelajar menunjukkan sikap intoleran, serta PPIM UIN Jakarta (2022) yang mengungkapkan bahwa 32% siswa masih memiliki pandangan eksklusif mencerminkan adanya kesenjangan antara cita-cita pendidikan Islam sebagai *rahmatan lil 'alamin* dengan realitas sosial saat ini. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji model dan proses internalisasi nilai-nilai toleransi pada santri di Pondok Pesantren Ngalah, sebuah pesantren multikultural yang dihuni oleh santri dari beragam latar belakang daerah, budaya, dan organisasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif fenomenologis dengan model analisis Colaizzi (1978). Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi, dengan validitas data dijamin melalui triangulasi dan *member checking*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa internalisasi nilai toleransi berlangsung melalui empat tahapan yang saling berkaitan, yaitu pemahaman nilai, penanaman nilai, pembiasaan, dan pengalaman langsung, yang melibatkan dimensi kognitif, afektif, dan perilaku secara simultan. Keberhasilan proses ini dipengaruhi oleh keberagaman latar belakang santri, intensitas interaksi sosial sehari-hari, serta keteladanan para pengasuh pesantren. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendekatan pendidikan berbasis pengalaman sosial dan kehidupan kolektif lebih efektif dalam membentuk karakter toleran dibandingkan pendekatan yang bersifat teoritis semata, sehingga memperkuat peran pesantren sebagai agen strategis dalam mempromosikan moderasi Islam dan harmoni sosial.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

As a nation living within a framework of diversity, Indonesia faces significant challenges in maintaining harmony amid differences in ethnicity, culture, language, and religion. In recent years, issues related to intolerance and social exclusivism have increasingly become major concerns in Indonesian society, particularly among younger generations. These conditions demonstrate that diversity, while representing a national strength, also requires continuous efforts to cultivate peaceful coexistence and mutual respect among citizens. These concerns are supported by empirical findings. A survey conducted by Setara Institute (2023) revealed that one in seven students demonstrates intolerant attitudes toward followers of other religions. Similarly, findings from PPIM UIN Jakarta (2022) showed that nearly one-third of students still hold exclusive views toward groups different from themselves. These findings indicate that the values of togetherness and coexistence, which should be nurtured through education, have not yet been fully internalized by the younger generation.

At the same time, there remains a considerable gap between the ideals of Islamic education as a mercy for all creation and the realities found in society. In this context, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are expected to serve as frontline institutions in cultivating the values of tolerance and moderation. As Islamic educational institutions deeply rooted in Indonesian society, pesantren possess great potential to shape students who are open-minded, respectful of differences, and capable of living peacefully alongside others. These values are instilled not only through classroom learning, but also through daily boarding school routines and the direct example set by the kiai (Islamic scholars and leaders).

The process of cultivating tolerance within pesantren can be understood through several theoretical perspectives. Bandura's Social Learning Theory explains that individuals learn values and behaviors through observation and interaction within their social environment. Likewise, the concept of Hidden Curriculum emphasizes that values are often transmitted implicitly through daily routines, institutional culture, and interpersonal relationships. This process is further strengthened through Experiential Learning and Value Internalization Theory, which explain how students develop understanding through direct lived experiences and gradually internalize moral and social values into their attitudes and behaviors. However, efforts to cultivate tolerance in many pesantren often lack a systematic and structured model, resulting in an inconsistent and less comprehensive internalization process across various aspects of students' lives. In many cases, tolerance education is still limited to formal discourse and institutional programs, while the experiential dimensions of students' daily social interactions receive less scholarly attention.

Pondok Pesantren Ngalah represents a distinctive example of a pesantren that consciously places tolerance, moderation, and balance at the center of its educational philosophy and daily practices. Its openness toward students from diverse social, cultural, and organizational backgrounds makes the pesantren an important social environment for understanding how tolerance values are internalized in everyday life. Through direct interaction and communal living, students are encouraged to develop mutual respect and peaceful coexistence despite existing differences.

Several previous studies, such as those conducted by Hanif et al. (2025) and Muhajir et al. (2025), have highlighted the importance of multicultural education within pesantren. Previous studies mostly focused on multicultural education policies and moderation programs in pesantren settings. However, limited studies have specifically explored the lived experiences of santri in internalizing tolerance values through daily

social interactions within multicultural pesantren environments. Therefore, this study offers a phenomenological perspective that emphasizes the experiential process of tolerance internalization among santri at Pondok Pesantren Ngalah. Although previous studies have contributed significantly to discussions on multicultural Islamic education, many of them remain normative and program-oriented. Existing research tends to focus more on institutional policies, curriculum implementation, or moderation programs rather than on how students personally experience and interpret tolerance in their everyday social lives. Consequently, the experiential and meaning-making dimensions of tolerance internalization among santri remain insufficiently explored, indicating a clear research gap within the study of multicultural pesantren education.

Based on this background, the present study focuses on how students experience the internalization of tolerance values at Pondok Pesantren Ngalah and how this process can be mapped into a comprehensible model. This research is not merely intended to document the pesantren's programs or policies, but also to explore more deeply the lived experiences of students, the ways they interpret differences, and how tolerance eventually becomes an integral part of their attitudes and behaviors.

The significance of this research extends beyond the interests of a single pesantren. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of multicultural Islamic education discourse by integrating perspectives from Social Learning Theory, Hidden Curriculum, Experiential Learning, and Value Internalization Theory in explaining the formation of tolerance values within pesantren life. Practically, the findings are expected to contribute to the development of character education in Islamic educational institutions and enrich academic discussions regarding effective strategies for strengthening moderation values among younger generations.

## 2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to explore and understand the lived experiences of santri in internalizing tolerance values within a multicultural pesantren environment. The phenomenological approach was selected because this study aimed to examine deeply how tolerance values are experienced, interpreted, and practiced through students' daily social interactions within the pesantren environment. This approach is considered appropriate for revealing the meaning-making process behind participants' experiences and social realities.

The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Ngalah, which was selected due to its strong multicultural characteristics, consisting of students from diverse regional, cultural, and organizational backgrounds. This setting was considered highly relevant for investigating the experiential process of tolerance internalization within the context of Islamic education and multicultural learning practices in pesantren (Siyono, 2022; Iqbal & Ridwan, 2025). In this study, the researcher functioned as the primary research instrument as well as a participant observer. The researcher's background as a pesantren alumnus also facilitated more natural communication and openness in establishing relationships with participants during the research process.

The participants in this study consisted of 10 informants, including 1 kiai, 2 ustaz, 1 administrator, and 6 senior santri. The participants were selected purposively based on three criteria: (1) being individuals directly involved in the process of value formation within the pesantren environment; (2) having lived, studied, or served in the pesantren for at least one year; and (3) possessing direct experience interacting with students from different cultural, social, and regional backgrounds. This participant selection was

intended to obtain rich and meaningful descriptions regarding the experiential process of tolerance internalization among santri (Syakur et al., 2022). Prior to data collection, the researcher conducted bracketing (*epoché*), namely suspending personal assumptions and subjective judgments to allow participants' experiences to emerge more authentically. Formal research permission was obtained from the pesantren leadership, and all interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent before being transcribed verbatim to preserve the originality of the data.

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Data collection was conducted from January to April 2026 through three techniques implemented integratively and triangulatively: participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and documentation study. Participant observation was conducted by taking part in various pesantren activities including religious learning sessions, communal work activities, student deliberations, and social interactions among santri to directly observe how tolerance values were practiced and expressed in everyday life. All observations were systematically documented in field notes. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with kiai, ustaz, administrators, and senior santri using flexible interview guidelines focusing on participants' experiences in interacting with individuals from different backgrounds, their understanding of tolerance, forms of role modeling within the pesantren, and changes in attitudes during their educational process. This approach enabled the researcher to explore participants' lived experiences in greater depth regarding multicultural interaction and tolerance practices within the pesantren environment.

Third, documentation data were collected in the form of institutional profiles, vision and mission statements, curricula, activity archives, student organization records, and other supporting documents that strengthened the contextual understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Data analysis was conducted using Colaizzi's phenomenological model (1978) through seven stages: (1) reading all interview transcripts repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences; (2) identifying significant statements containing important meanings related to tolerance values from interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation data; (3) coding significant statements manually and grouping them into thematic clusters representing tolerance internalization experiences within the pesantren environment; (4) formulating meanings from each coded statement by considering participants' social contexts and lived experiences; (5) organizing the formulated meanings into broader thematic categories to construct an exhaustive description of the phenomenon; (6) formulating the fundamental structure of participants' overall experiences to capture the essence of

tolerance internalization; and (7) validating the findings through member checking with the participants. Through this analytical process, the researcher was able to identify experiential patterns of multicultural interaction, role modeling, and value internalization occurring within pesantren life (Iqbal & Ridwan, 2025; Syakur et al., 2022).

The trustworthiness and credibility of the data were ensured through several validation strategies. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from kiai, ustaz, administrators, and santri, while method triangulation was applied through the integration of interviews, observations, and documentation. Time triangulation was also conducted through data collection at different times and situations to obtain consistent findings (Nurfajriani et al., 2024; Sinaga, 2023). In addition, prolonged engagement was carried out through continuous involvement in pesantren activities during the research period to develop a deeper understanding of participants' social realities. Peer debriefing was conducted through discussions with academic colleagues to review data interpretation and minimize researcher bias. An audit trail was maintained by systematically documenting all research processes, including field notes, interview transcripts, coding procedures, and analytical decisions. Furthermore, reflexivity was continuously practiced by critically reflecting on the researcher's background, assumptions, and positionality throughout the research process in order to maintain analytical transparency and objectivity. These validation strategies were applied to strengthen the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings in qualitative phenomenological inquiry.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

This study produced findings organized into three major themes: (1) the model of tolerance value internalization, (2) the process of tolerance internalization, and (3) factors influencing the internalization of tolerance values at Pondok Pesantren Ngalah. Data were obtained through in depth interviews with kiai, administrators, ustaz, and senior santri, supported by participant observation and documentation conducted from January to April 2026.

#### 1. Model of Tolerance Value Internalization

The findings revealed that the internalization of tolerance values at Pondok Pesantren Ngalah does not occur through rigid formal instruction. Instead, tolerance develops naturally through communal living and continuous social interaction among students from different regional, cultural, and organizational backgrounds. Students experience tolerance not merely as theoretical knowledge, but as a lived social reality embedded in everyday pesantren life.

One student, Ilham, explained:

"Here, the students come from different backgrounds, so whether we like it or not, we have to understand one another."

This statement reflects an adaptive social consciousness formed through continuous intercultural interaction within the pesantren environment. Tolerance emerges not because students are forced to accept differences, but because daily coexistence requires them to negotiate social relationships peacefully.

Similarly, Adam stated: "At first, I was a bit surprised, but over time it became normal because we meet and spend time together every day."

This finding demonstrates that tolerance develops gradually through repetitive interaction and shared experiences. The students' initial cultural unfamiliarity slowly transformed into mutual acceptance through everyday encounters. Observational findings also showed that collective religious activities such as Tafsir Jalalain study sessions were conducted in an atmosphere of equality, discipline, and mutual respect. No discriminatory attitudes were observed among students during communal religious learning activities.

**Table 1. Thematic Mapping of Tolerance Internalization Model**

Main Theme	Subtheme	Coding Result	Findings	Interview Evidence
Communal Living	Diversity Exposure	Adaptation process	Students learn to accept differences through shared living	"We have to understand one another."
Social Interaction	Daily engagement	Continuous interaction	Tolerance develops naturally through repeated encounters	"We meet and spend time together every day."
Religious Activities	Collective worship	Shared spiritual experience	Religious activities strengthen togetherness	"Religious activities strengthen our sense of unity."
Pesantren Environment	Institutional culture	Respect-based environment	The pesantren supports harmonious relationships	Observation during <i>Tafsir Jalalain</i> sessions

## 2. Process of Tolerance Internalization

The findings indicate that tolerance internalization occurs gradually through four interconnected stages: value understanding, value cultivation, habituation, and direct experience. In the first stage, students gained an initial understanding of tolerance through religious learning and pesantren teachings. However, tolerance was not introduced merely as doctrinal knowledge but as a practical moral orientation. In the second stage, tolerance values were cultivated indirectly through collective activities, dormitory life, and role modeling from kiai and ustaz. Students learned how to respect differences by observing social behavior within the pesantren environment.

One participant stated: "The kiai never differentiate students. Everyone is treated equally here." This statement indicates that students internalized tolerance through observation of inclusive leadership and everyday social practices. In the habituation stage, tolerance became embedded through repetitive interaction patterns. Students continuously interacted with peers from diverse backgrounds during learning activities, communal work, and dormitory life. At the final stage, direct experience became the most influential mechanism in shaping tolerance values. Students personally experienced coexistence with individuals from different cultural and organizational backgrounds, making tolerance part of their personal identity rather than merely a conceptual understanding.

**Table 2. Stages of Tolerance Internalization**

Stage	Mechanism	Coding Category	Achieved Outcome
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Value Understanding	Religious learning	Cognitive awareness	Understanding tolerance values
Value Cultivation	Role modeling and communal life	Social adaptation	Initial value internalization
Habituation	Repetitive interaction	Behavioral formation	Tolerance becomes habitual
Direct Experience	Multicultural coexistence	Identity transformation	Tolerance becomes personal identity

### 3. Factors Influencing Tolerance Internalization

The findings identified three major factors influencing the success of tolerance internalization within the pesantren environment: multicultural student diversity, the intensity of social interaction, and collective religious activities. First, the diversity of students' cultural, regional, and organizational backgrounds created a social environment that required continuous adaptation. Living and learning with peers from different backgrounds encouraged students to develop empathy, mutual understanding, and social flexibility. Through this process, diversity became a valuable resource for learning tolerance rather than a source of division. Second, the intensity of daily interactions accelerated the internalization process. Students interacted continuously in dormitories, classrooms, worship spaces, and various communal activities, creating strong emotional bonds and social connections. These repeated encounters enabled students to become more familiar with differences, thereby reducing prejudice and fostering mutual acceptance.

The third factor was the role of collective religious activities. Beyond serving as spiritual practices, these activities functioned as important mechanisms for strengthening solidarity and peaceful coexistence among students. Participation in shared religious programs provided opportunities for cooperation, interaction, and the development of a sense of belonging within the pesantren community. As explained by a pesantren administrator:

“Religious activities carried out collectively strengthen togetherness among students.” (Mr. Faiz, Pesantren Administrator)

This statement demonstrates that collective spirituality contributed significantly to the construction of social harmony within the pesantren environment. Religious activities acted as a unifying force that reinforced interpersonal relationships and nurtured a shared commitment to mutual respect despite existing differences.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the internalization of tolerance values at Pondok Pesantren Ngalah occurs through multidimensional social and experiential processes embedded within students' everyday lives. Unlike formal approaches emphasizing theoretical instruction, tolerance at Pondok Pesantren Ngalah develops naturally through communal interaction, collective religious life, and multicultural coexistence. From the perspective of Banks' Multicultural Education Theory, these findings indicate that pesantren can function as multicultural educational spaces where diversity is experienced directly through inclusive interaction and equal participation. The pesantren environment provided opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds to interact intensively and construct mutual understanding through everyday social engagement. These findings support previous studies emphasizing that multicultural education within pesantren environments contributes significantly to the development of inclusive attitudes and peaceful coexistence among students.

The findings also strongly reflect Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which explains that individuals learn social values through observation, imitation, and interaction. The role of kiai and ustaz as social models became central in shaping students' tolerant behavior. Students observed how religious leaders treated all individuals equally, resolved differences peacefully, and maintained harmonious relationships. This process demonstrates that tolerance was learned not only cognitively but also behaviorally through social modeling and repeated interaction. The phenomenological findings further reveal that direct experience played a dominant role in transforming students' understanding of diversity. This aligns with Dewey's Experiential Learning perspective, which argues that meaningful education emerges through reflective experience and active engagement with social reality. Students at Pondok Pesantren Ngalah did not simply study tolerance conceptually; they lived within diversity every day. Consequently, tolerance became emotionally meaningful because students personally experienced negotiation, adaptation, and coexistence with individuals from different backgrounds. This study also reflects Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory. Several students initially experienced discomfort and cultural surprise when interacting with peers from different backgrounds.

However, continuous interaction gradually transformed their perspectives toward diversity. Adam's statement "At first, I was surprised, but over time it became normal" illustrates a transformative learning process in which repeated social encounters reshaped personal assumptions and attitudes toward difference. Compared with previous studies, this research supports findings emphasizing the importance of multicultural interaction within pesantren environments. However, unlike earlier studies that primarily focused on institutional policies, moderation programs, or curriculum implementation, this study specifically highlights the lived experiences and phenomenological dimensions of tolerance internalization among santri.

The findings reveal that tolerance formation is deeply influenced by emotional experience, social adaptation, and communal interaction rather than solely by formal educational discourse. Critically, the findings demonstrate why direct experience is more effective than theoretical instruction alone in shaping tolerant character. Continuous communal living creates emotional closeness, empathy, and mutual dependency among students, reducing prejudice and social distance naturally. The pesantren environment therefore functions not merely as an educational institution but also as a transformative social space where students reconstruct their perspectives toward diversity through real-life interaction. The broader social implication of these findings is that multicultural Islamic education should prioritize experiential and relational learning approaches rather than relying exclusively on normative instruction. Educational environments that encourage direct interaction, collective engagement, and inclusive communal life possess greater potential to cultivate tolerance, moderation, and peaceful coexistence among younger generations.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This study successfully reveals that the internalization of tolerance values at Pondok Pesantren Ngalah Pasuruan takes place through a social mechanism that is natural, contextual, and multidimensional in nature. This process does not occur merely through formal instruction, but rather forms organically through four interrelated and continuous stages: value comprehension, value cultivation, habituation, and direct experience. These four stages involve the simultaneous integration of cognitive,

affective, and behavioral dimensions, so that tolerance values are not only understood conceptually but are also internalized and manifested in the students' daily conduct.

The primary factors determining the success of this internalization process are the diversity of students' backgrounds, which creates a heterogeneous social condition; the intensity of daily social interaction, which takes place in an intense and sustained manner; and the role modeling of the pesantren's caregivers, who serve as behavioral models of tolerance for the students. These three factors work synergistically in shaping the pesantren environment as a conducive social space for the cultivation of tasamuh (tolerance), tawassuth (moderation), and tawazun (balance) within the students' character.

Theoretically, this study contributes by strengthening the relevance of Rokeach's (1973) theory of value internalization, Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, and Allport's Contact Hypothesis within the context of multicultural Islamic boarding school education in Indonesia—a synthesis that has been insufficiently developed in the existing literature. Empirically, the findings affirm that an educational approach grounded in social experience and communal living (experiential and communal learning) proves more effective in fostering sustained tolerant character than approaches that are predominantly theoretical and instructional in nature.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations in terms of its subject scope, which is confined to a single pesantren institution using a phenomenological approach; thus, the findings are not intended to be broadly generalized. Future research is recommended to employ a comparative approach across multiple pesantren institutions or a mixed-methods design, in order to generate a more comprehensive and measurable understanding of the effectiveness of tolerance value internalization models within the context of multicultural Islamic education in Indonesia.

## 5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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